



Florida House of Representatives

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HOUSE REPUBLICANS CALL ON FLORIDA'S SENATORS TO OPPOSE DEMOCRATIC HEALTH CARE PLAN

~ Republicans: Don't force unsustainable Medicaid mandates on Florida's taxpayer ~

TALLAHASSEE, FL – This afternoon members of the Florida House Republican Conference urged Florida Senators Bill Nelson and George LeMieux to oppose Democratic health care reform proposals currently before the U.S. Senate that would dramatically expand Medicaid and force millions of dollars in unfunded mandates onto Florida taxpayers.

In a letter sent to both Florida Senators, Republican legislators highlighted their concerns that the recent health care reform legislation proposed by the Democratic leadership of both the U.S. House and Senate will devastate Florida's budget and jeopardize the state's ability to create jobs at a time when the state is already facing ongoing revenue shortfalls.

The current plan proposed in the U.S. Senate for health care reform is estimated by Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to add an additional 1.4 million Florida residents to the state's Medicaid roll. The House Republicans point out that increasing enrollment by that magnitude will raise state Medicaid costs dramatically and potentially force tax increases and spending cuts at a time when the legislature is already addressing an overwhelming budget shortfall.

Further underscoring their point is AHCA's analysis that reveals the first five years of the U.S. Senate's plan would pass on \$3.96 billion in additional costs to Florida taxpayers. According to AHCA, by 2019 state taxpayers' annual costs will be nearly \$820 million and growing each year thereafter. This would be devastating to Florida's economy, would hinder economic growth, and likely result in higher taxes and job losses in Florida.

A copy of the text of the letter is included below and a PDF of the letter is attached.

(more)

Dear Senators Nelson and LeMieux:

As the health care reform debate in Washington progresses, we wanted to bring an issue of concern to your attention relating to proposals to dramatically expand Medicaid which will impact the State of Florida's budget and place our state's ability to create jobs in jeopardy.

Floridians are justifiably concerned with our state and nation's troubled economy and its effects on them, their families and their communities. As members of the Florida House of Representatives, our top priority is to help get Florida's economy restarted and create jobs for Floridians. We know that you share these goals as well.

It is with that priority in mind that we write you today to express our concerns with the recent health care reform legislation proposed by the leadership of both the U.S. House and Senate and the potentially devastating effects it will have on the economic health of our state. Unlike in Washington, Florida state leaders are constitutionally obligated to balance the budget. With our state's budget facing ongoing revenue shortfalls, the additional federal spending mandates contained in both the House and Senate's proposals will make it more difficult for Florida's families to realize economic stability and will jeopardize the job creation so important to our economic recovery.

While the analysis of the Democratic U.S. House plan released last Thursday has not yet been finalized, the current plan proposed in the U.S. Senate for health care is estimated by Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to add an additional 1.4 million Florida residents to the state's Medicaid roll. Increasing enrollment by that magnitude will raise state Medicaid costs and force tax increases and spending cuts.

In fact, under the first five years of the U.S. Senate's plan, AHCA estimates \$3.96 billion in additional costs to Florida taxpayers. By 2019 the same estimates show state taxpayers' annual costs at nearly \$820 million and growing each year thereafter. While the unfunded costs in the Senate's plan are unmanageable, the proposal being considered in the U.S. House will be even more devastating.

With Florida already facing budget shortfalls of potentially \$2.3 to 5.5 billion over the next two years, it would be fiscally irresponsible to add hundreds of millions of dollars more in unfunded costs onto the backs of the Florida taxpayers. Increasing Medicaid at this rate is unsustainable. Such a move would harm any attempts to grow Florida's economy and create the jobs that Florida's workers need.

As members of the House Republican Conference, we urge you to consider these impacts and oppose the Medicaid spending mandates contained in health proposals currently before the Congress and work for common sense health care reforms that offer better approaches for all Floridians.

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